**DOCUMENT RESUME**

ED 157 030 CS 004 241

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TITLE Development of a Vocabulary Building Program for Vocational Education Students.
PUB DATE [78]
NOTE 13p.; Report prepared at South Plains College

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Reading Programs; *Context Clues; Post Secondary Education; *Reading Centers; *Reading Improvement; Reading Programs; *Technical Education; *Vocabulary Development; *Vocational Education; Vocational Schools

ABSTRACT

In view of the fact that vocational education students want only the essentials of the reading curriculum, the reading center at Eastern New Mexico University (Roswell) began a program of direct vocabulary building. This method stresses application of words to be learned, making them function for the learner, as well as a high interest factor. Vocabulary was determined to be the greatest source of reading difficulty for these vocational students, although an underlying principle of the program is the assumption that not all learners need to learn the same vocabulary. The program was organized on the principle that the meaning of the unfamiliar word should be obtained through context, thus helping the student to see the relationship of the word to his or her technical interest. Of the three phases of instruction, two are not required for all students, although the technical vocabulary unit is mandatory. Phase one guides the students through chapters by means of audiotape, calling attention to unfamilar general vocabulary terms. Phase two consists of a diagnostic pretest, a vocabulary contextual teaching session, and an evaluative posttest. The third phase is designated for technical vocabulary development. Students who have used the program have developed both in vocabulary and in technical ability. (DF)

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# DEVELOPMENT OF A VOCABULARY BUILDING PROGRAM FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

Bobby M. James

Each year students in ever increasing numbers are abandoning the old maxim that "In order to make a 'good living' you must have a college degree." These students are instead turning to the vocationally oriented schools that hold the promise of a good job after a relatively short period of training. They are beginning to realize that everyone does not need to have a college degree to live comfortably and respectably. What they may not realize is that everyone must possess the ability to read, and this is where we reading teachers get our cue for action.

## Vocational Studies at ENMU-R

The vocational studies program at Eastern New Mexico University--Roswell Campus is a program encompassing a wide range of occupational areas. Training is offered in the areas of auto mechanics, auto body and paint, welding, electronics, aviation maintenance technician, air conditioning and refrigeration, dental assistants, nurses assistants, associate degree nurses, watch repair and jewelry manufacture, and office occupations. With such a wide variety of p_ograms offered, a great dissimilarity of students is expected. Add to this the fact that students are admitted to these programs after meeting a bare minimum of requirements, in most cases a high school diploma is not even

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needed. This factor attributes to wide range of reading abilities of the students using the reading center.

In effect, then, a semi open-door policy of admissions is employed. Very few students who apply are turned down. This again means that the variance among the students' reading abilities is quite large. It also presents us with the great challenge of directing the reading of the student in a direction that will be most useful to him in pursuing his chosen vocation.

## APPLIED VOCABULARY TRAINING

Applied vocabulary training is a term adapted from McDonald's (5) direct vocabulary building. He says that all students should not work with identical sets of words since weaknesses vary among students. He also points out that words should be studied in context rather than in isolation. McDonald stresses application of word learning; that is, the word to work for the learner. These ideas are the basis of applied vocabulary training. We have tried to incorporate these principles into the program so that the students might see the usefulness of improving their vocabularies. However, before going into the actual program, let us regress to the beginning of the reading center at ENMU-R.

The reading center at Easter New Mexico University--Roswell began teaching reading improvement to vocational training students in September of 1972 using the "Reading 300" series published by Educational Developmental Laboratories. In past endeavors, this program has proved to be a sound and successful one. However, it soon became evident that something was missing from this curriculum. It also became clear that

the needs of the vocational students in reading were quite different to those of the more academically oriented student, and the "Reading 300" series was more academically than vocationally oriented.

The vocational student is in school for only one reason--to learn a specific trade. Anything that interferes with his acquisition of the knowledge necessary to acquire proficiency in his given vocation is to him a waste of time. This student wants only the "meat" of the curriculum, not the "fat". Reading material not pertinent to his vocation is generally looked upon as not interesting and not worth reading.

These facts, plus other observations, led this writer to believe that the factor of interest in what one is reading was the missing component of the program. Continued use of the "Reading 300" series was needed, but this basic program had to be supplemented with something to catch the interest of the students.

Interest, then, became the key word in the search for supplementary materials. But this interest had to be one conceived by the student not the teacher. Marksheffel (3) has found that when teachers set the student's goals, the student is then relieved of the responsibility of attaining that goal. The responsibility of reaching a certain goal must lie with the student.

In studies conducted by Bond and Tinker (1), much evidence was found to show that students make greater progress in reading when they read materials that are highly interesting to them. This interest breeds motivation; and motivation, of course, is of vital importance in any learning situation. So it became a necessity that materials that

were of interest to the students be found, and according to Harris (2), there are two main ways of doing that. First, there is the use of material which is intrinsically capable of attracting and holding the reader's interest. This material, more often than not, will have to be prepared by the teacher. The second method is the use of material that is presented in such a way that it fosters interest. This writer felt that the first of these methods was the better of the two. By employing it, a supplemental program could be designed to meet a more specific or particular student need.

Through formal testing and observation the students had shown that they were having the most difficulty with vocabulary, both technical and general. Their reading vocabularies in both areas were low. Materials such as the EDL Word Clues book were helping to improve their general vocabulary, but the instructors in the different departments still felt that their students were not reading and understanding the technical terms with which they had to work.

Before going any further, the two terms "general" and "technical vocabulary" should be defined. The term general vocabulary is used when referring to those terms whose usage falls outside the realm of technical jargon. Words that are not necessarily associated with a specific trade would be considered general. Words which apply to a specific trade and are used to describe an act or a piece of equipment in that trade are considered to be of a technical nature. Some words can be used in either a general or technical manner. For the purpose of the vocabulary program and this paper, these words shall be considered technical because this is the way the students use them.

The area upon which it was decided to concentrate our efforts in writing a vocabulary improvement program was auto mechanics. The textbooks in use there have a readability level of 10th to 11th grade, as measured by the Dale-Chall readability formula. The average reading level of the auto mechanics students is 8.2, as measured by the California Achievement Test, Advanced Battery. The discrepancy between the reading abilities of the students and the readability level of the material in use was great enough to warrant some attention from us.

The basis for this program was the various auto mechanics books in use. The goal toward which the program was aimed was to write the material in such a way that it would, first, arouse the interest of the student; then, through use, it would improve his technical vocabulary. The same format as the Word Clues book was followed since this was an approach our students were familiar with, and it had been rather effective in improving their general vocabulary.

All of the words used in this vocabulary program were taken directly from textbooks of the participants. By pointing this fact out to the student, it was felt that he would become acutely aware of the necessity to know what a word means and how it applies to the field of auto mechanics. The student must come to realize that improving his vocabulary and reading can also improve his proficiency as a mechanic. This point of view was also taken by Robinson (6) when he stated that the goal of a reading improvement program should be directly related to the life situation of the student involved.

As the program evolved, it was decided that the applied vocabulary training concept could be expanded to also encompass general terms from

the student's textbook. The rational behind this expansion was that if the students were made aware that these general vocabulary terms also came from their manuals, it might increase their incentive to become familiar with the usage of those words.

This aspect of the total program is arranged in two parts, both on audio tape. The first segment is a controlled survey of a chapter with emphasis placed on new words that the student might encounter. The second phase deals with acquainting the student with the various general vocabulary terms found in that chapter. This will be explained in more detail later.

Implementation of the Program.

The applied vocabulary training program is built upon the principle of deriving the meaning of the unfamiliar word through context. By using this method of attack, it is intended that the student will be made aware of the direct relationship between a word and its importance to him as an auto mechanic. As was stated earlier, this program was built on the principle that all students need not work with identical sets of words. Therefore, the areas of concentration have been divided into three parts. The first two segments of the training are not required work for all students. The third portion--technical vocabulary training--is mandatory for everyone.

Phase One. Phase one consists of a controlled survey of the chapter about to be studied. By means of an audio tape, the listener is directed through the chapter with emphasis being placed on chapter headings, subtopic headings, and captions for pictures and idagrams.

Special care is given in pointing out general vocabulary terms that may be unfamiliar to the listener. The student is instructed to underline each of these words in an effort to further call his attention to them. Upon completion of this tape--usually 15 to 30 minutes in length--the listener is prepared for phase two of applied vocabulary training.

Phase Two. Phase two is separated into three parts. Part one is a pre-test to determine exactly which general vocabulary terms are not known by the student. This, like all materials in applied vocabulary training, is a teacher prepared test. Part two consists of an audio tape dealing with those terms that were found to be new to the student. Along with this tape, an alphabetized work sheet of those terms is prepared. Each work sheet consists of ten words with spaces for the learner to write the word and its dictionary pronunciation. Then by listening to the tape, the student is given the definition of each word and its various usages in a contextual setting. Using the word competent as an example, a typical entry would sound like this.

> The foreman must be a highly competent mechanic, familiar with and able to perform all jobs that enter his shop. Competent--a verb meaning able, sufficient. Another variation of the word is competency. It is a noun meaning the ability to be skilled, able, or sufficient. Let's hear the sentence again using able. The foreman must be a highly able mechanic, familiar with and able to perform all jobs that enter his shop.

During this time directions are also given for the listener to write the word in the spaces provided. In this way the learner is exposed to the word visually, auditorily, and kinesthetically. Hopefully, one of these stimulations, or a combination of them, will enhance the student's retention of the meaning of that word.

Part three of this phase is a post-test covering those words that the student has studied. The pre-test and post-test parts of this phase are felt to be of great importance in helping the instructor better meet the needs of the students. The more defined the student needs are, the better we will be able to meet those needs, and the pre-test, post-test aspects of phase two help considerable in defining those needs.

Let it be reiterated that only those students who have scored below a certain level on a standardized vocabulary test or who have been observed to have difficulty with general vocabulary terms are required to participate in phases one and two. Those students who have shown no difficulty in this area are instructed to begin with phase three.

Phase Three. Phase three of applied vocabulary training deals with building the technical vocabulary of all students. The words to be studied are arranged in an order corresponding to their use in the text-book chapter. A typical entry in this section would appear this way:

ven.tur.i (ven-shər'-e)

1. a. In order to build a simple, basic carburetor, we would begin with an air horn, or a plain round metal tube. We would then modify this air horn by building a venturi in it to impede the air flow. Write a definition or synonym.

1. b. As the venturi compresses the air, it also speeds up the flow of air thereby increasing the vacuum.
Venturi means:
(a) dam
(b) sediment
(c) restriction
(d) porous mass

1. c. ven.tur.i (ven-shər'-e) n: that part of a tube, channel, pipe, etc., so tapered as to form a smaller or constricted area. A liquid, or a gas, moving through this constricted area will speed up and as it passes the narrowest point, a partial vacuum will be formed.

1. The venturi principle is used in the carburetor.
   (a) true
   (b) false
2. The taper of the venturi facing the flow of air is much _____ than the taper facing away from the flow of air.
   (a) more gradual
   (b) more constricted
   (c) steeper

Part "C" of this entry can be varied to suit the word. For instance, the student could be instructed to pick the words that are synonyms of the word being studied, or they could be required to pick the antonyms. Another variation could be to choose the sentence (sentences) in which the word being studied is used correctly. This variety is important to help combat boredom. Remember, the prime objective of this entire program is to create interest and thus motivate the learner.

This writer is of the opinion that through this kind of program the needs of the students can be better met. However, the "Reading 300" series has not been eliminated. Emphasis is still placed on controlled reading, study skills, and listen and read exercises. McDonald (4) has found that reading programs are very limited in their effectiveness when one aspect, such as rate of reading, is overemphasized. Well-rounded programs usually deliver better results. Our aim in developing applied vocabulary training was not to "cram vocabulary training down the student's throat." The primary purpose of the program was to expand on the existing curriculum in order to meet a more defined student need.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The entire purpose of applied vocabulary training is to allow the reading lab to serve a very real and practical purpose to the student. If read-

ing is going to become a useful tool of the vocational student, it must be tied in as closely as possible to his vocation. It must serve a very real function in his life. Reading is a tool through which one can achieve a certain goal. It is a means to an end, not an end in itself. This fact is of vital importance to those of us teaching reading in a vocational education environment. Vocational education students want only the "meat" of the curriculum, not the "fat." If reading is going to be of any use to these students, a program of instruction must be designed corresponding to their individual needs. If this is not done, then the reading center will be serving no useful purpose.

Interest can be the key to motivating the learner; it is certainly of tremendous importance. Applied vocabulary training is designed to arouse the interest of the students involved. By working with words that the student must deal with everyday, it is intended that he will see the need for learning the meaning of a word and how it relates to his vocation. Because the program is designed to accommodate the student, he becomes responsible for setting his goals and attaining them. The responsibility of the reading teacher is one of helping his students achieve their goals, not setting their goals for them. The student comes first: his needs, his interests, and his problems.

Conclusive results as to the validity of the program are not available at this time. Because the applied vocabulary training program was only started a short time ago, a comparatively small number of students have been exposed to it. However, those students who have used it appear to have increased their reading abilities; and perhaps of more im-

portance, their proficiency as auto mechanics seems to have increased. The instructors in auto mechanics have observed an increase in their students' abilities to work with and understand those terms with which they have worked in the reading lab. Therefore, the transfer of learning from applied vocabulary training to auto mechanics seems to be taking place. One must remember, however, that these conclusions are based on the opinion and observations of this writer and others who are associated with the program. Further time and expansion of the concept is necessary for conclusive results to be obtained.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the recommendation of this writer that further research and application of this program be attempted. The principles upon which the program rests seem to be sound. However, only time, use and sophistication of the ideas brought forth in this paper will tell if our efforts are as successful and meaningful as they now appear to be.

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